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***CHRIST IS RISEN! HRISTOS A ÎNVIAT!***



Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Jerusalem), 2005



# SOLIA

THE  
HERALD

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## CHRIST IS RISEN! HRISTOS A INVIAT!

Wishing the venerable clergy, monastics  
& faithful of our Holy Episcopate,  
as well as all of our readers,  
a Blessed Pascha.

**His Eminence, Archbishop NATHANIEL**  
**His Grace, Bishop IRINEU**  
**& the Chancery Staff**

### “Christ is Risen” in Many Languages

**Aleut (Sugpiag):** Kriiiiistuusaq Ungwektuq! Pichinuq  
Ungwektuq!  
**Albanian (Tosk):** Krishhti Unjall! Vertet Unjall!  
**Arabic:** Al Maseeh Qam! Haqqan Qam!  
**Armenian:** Christos harjav i merelotz! Orhniale harutjun  
Christosi!  
**Chinese:** Helisituosi fuhuole! Queshi fuhuole!  
**Slavonic:** Christos Voskrese! Voistino Voskrese!  
**Coptic (Egypt):** PiKhirstos af tonf! Khen o methmi af  
tonf!  
**Ethiopian:** Christos T'ensah Em' Muhtan! Exai' Ab-her  
Eokala!  
**French:** Le Christ est ressuscite — il est vraiment ressuscite!  
**Gaelic (Irish):** Ta Criosd ar eirigh! Go deimhin, ta e ar  
eirigh!  
**German:** Christus ist auferstanden! Wahrhaft auferstanden!  
**Greek:** Christos Anesti! Alithos Anesti!  
**Hawaiian:** Ua Ala Hou 'o Kristo! Ua Ala 'I 'o No 'oia!  
**Hebrew:** Ha-Mashiah qom! Be-emet qom!  
**Hungarian:** Krisztus feltamadt! Valoban feltamadt!  
**Italian:** Cristo e' Risorto! Veramente e' Risorto!  
**Japanese:** Harisutosu Fukkatsu! Jitsu Ni Fukkatsu!  
**Latin:** Christus Resurrectus Est! Vere Resurrectus Est!  
**Norwegian:** Christus er Oppstanden! Sandelig Han er  
Oppstanden!  
**Polish:** Khristus Zmartvikstau! Zaiste Zmartvikstau!  
**Spanish:** Cristo ha resucitado! En verdad, esta resucitado!  
**Ukrainian:** Khristos Voskres! Voistinu Voskres!



# THE CONQUEROR OF DEATH

by  
Rev. Hieromonk Calinic (Berger)

Before the spectacular miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus, a man become a four-day stinking corpse, Jesus wept. Patristic writers, such as St. Cyril of Alexandria, point out that He wept as a man – to show that He was truly human – but it could also be said that He wept as God.

God did not create death. Death is not what was meant to be. Man chose death for himself when he decided to seek life and ultimate meaning in created, earthly things, taking them as his goal and source, instead of a means to his Goal and Source of life. Because of this, death has become the ultimate fundamental of human existence. All we do, all of our hard work, all the talents we labor so hard to acquire, all achievements, ranks and goals, are made vanity by death. All is lost in death. Death is the limit, the boundary, of human life.

It is for this reason that monasticism points to death as man's great teacher. God's decrees are irreversible, and death is the great didactic given to us to show us that this world is not the source of our life and meaning. God is the source of our life and meaning. It could even be said that the way to judge the depth or seriousness of a philosophy is to examine its treatment of death. Does death have meaning, or destroy all meaning?

Christianity confronts death directly and does not "sugar-coat" it – in other words, we do not say that death is "natural," or just another of life's passages. True, it is one of life's passages, but it is not "natural." Christianity calls death what it is: a tragedy, a scandal and an outrage. How could it be otherwise? No matter how elderly or sick someone was, when they are gone, we are sorrowful, being separated from one we loved. Death separates irrevocably.

Such is the state of affairs that Jesus encountered in Bethany and He wept. But our God is an active God, not one exiled to heaven, but with an active interest in all the details of our lives. No problem is too great or too trivial for our God, and He is not one to leave things *status quo*. He did something about it. He became a man and Himself endured death – in all its horror, the worst type, the shameful, public death of a criminal, in front of his own mother – and He rose from the dead, for it was not possible that He being sinless be held by it. And by so doing He transformed death from a necessity resulting from the irreversible decree of God to a loving free choice: he gives us all the offer to carry the cross and die with Him, and hence to participate in His Resurrection. He redeems

all human life, achievement and relationships, He redeems the body and the material world, He does not remove death but its sting, and He replaces it with ever-lasting life. Death is not ultimate human fundamental, but our God is.

Jesus is our God, and as Lord raises Lazarus from the dead. Lazarus, who stank for the rest of his life, sits at a table with Jesus eating, an undeniable witness to Jesus' power, mission and universal offer. And at this moment two people are confronted with this offer: a prostitute and a priest.

The sinful woman broke an alabaster box of costly ointment, and weeps at Jesus' feet, dries them with her hair. She broke the box – i.e. saved nothing for herself – and poured it out as her offering. It cost 300 *denari*, which was 300 days' wages. This latter fact enrages the disciple who sits in a place of honor next

to Jesus and manages the money. The hymns of Holy Week tell us even more about the contrast between these two witnesses of the miracle of Lazarus, being quite explicit as to where the woman came from just then, and the background of Judas. Make no mistake: Judas was an Apostle and had the gift of healing. Yet still he was more interested in worldly things, could not look up

from temporary concerns, and had no horizon of vision. He took Holy Communion. But death was not his teacher.

The sinful woman understood what Judas did not: Christianity is about healing. Not just temporary healing, but from man's biggest problems: egotism, sin and death. The great paradigm of Orthodoxy is not that of righteous/sinful, but of healthy/sick. All of us need healing.

Herein is the message of the raising of Lazarus and its aftermath: we should not concern ourselves with what others say or do, regardless as to who they are, but follow Christ – not only in His time of joy, triumph and glory, when the crowds follow, but also in His humiliation, Cross and death. This cross He offers to each one of us, that we too may share in His resurrection, and we are free to accept or reject this offer. But if we accept Christ's offer, we must accept all of it, for without the Cross, there is no Resurrection. Seeing Him go to Jerusalem is then our great victory. For this the Church cries out, "Hosanna in the Highest!" – but not the Conqueror of Rome, but to the Conqueror of Death.

Christ is Risen!  
Truly He is Risen!

ORTHODOX  
THOUGHT  
AND LIFE



# THE CROSS OF ST. DIMAS

By Frederica Mathewes-Green

The Gospels don't tell us much about the two thieves crucified with Jesus. Tradition calls the "Good Thief" Dimas or Dismas, while the "Bad Thief" is named Gestas. Dimas' legend reveals a little more. As a young man he was the leader of a robber band in Egypt, and encountered the Holy Family during their sojourn after Jesus' birth. He discerned something special about the Jewish family, we're told, and ordered his men to spare them. Thirty years later he saw that child once again, nailed to a cross beside him.

During those hours of agony on Friday afternoon, Luke's Gospel reveals that Gestas berated Jesus, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But Dimas rebuked his fellow robber: "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."

Dimas then went on, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." The Lord replied, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

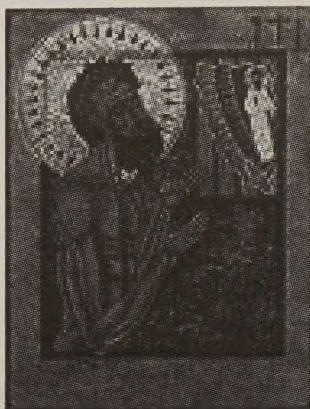
From this point on our attention is fixed on the Cross of Christ. We see the sky darken, hear Jesus cry "Eloi, lama sabachthani!," see him offered a drink of vinegar, and then, with "a loud cry," breathe his last.

Dimas must have seen these things too, and in the midst of his blazing agony wondered what it all meant. No doubt the Lord's words had surprised him. Dimas was expecting that Jesus would somehow show his kingly power. If something was going to happen "today," it would have to happen fast. No doubt he turned his head, whenever he could bear the pain, to gaze at the strange dying man beside him.

Today we call crucifixion "barbaric," but the method was carefully thought through by very civilized Romans. They needed a form of execution that would deal memorably with those who posed a threat to the state (like the rebel bands which plagued the land, robbing and killing villagers who resisted their cause). Crucifixion literally holds the criminal up as an example. The lesson continues when the body is left hanging after death, and it becomes a feast for pecking birds and gnawing beasts. This shameful decay deprives the family of the comfort of a gravesite, and rebels of a rallying point.

But best of all, death by crucifixion was not swift. If the Romans found it useful to hurry things along, a quick cracking blow across the legs with a stout length of wood was sufficient.

Imagine what thoughts went through Dimas' mind as he saw his companion weaken and then actually die. Was it minutes or hours that he continued to



survive there, his consciousness wavering in a fog of pain? A glance would show the body of Jesus sagging wretchedly, glazing over with blue, and no longer even twitching to throw off the feasting flies. "Today you will be with me," Dimas perhaps recalled. Yes, he would think, that is where I am going. It doesn't look like Paradise.

Perhaps Dimas continued hoping for some miraculous pardon and rescue, even though the weight of the neighboring corpse mocked his hopes. What did he think as he saw the day draw to an empty

close, and no angel from heaven stop the soldier who stood before him, swinging back the club that would shatter his legs and end his life?

Through two thousand years uncountable ranks of men and women have died for Christ, the ultimate witness of their faith. But they had this to strengthen them: they lived after the Resurrection, and knew that Christ has conquered Death.

Dimas didn't know that. He wasn't even a disciple, and can't have known much about Jesus beyond hearsay. Yet for some reason he found in the battered figure beside him a spark for crazy hope. There was a strange light about this wretched criminal. It was like he knew something. No, it was that he *was* something. Whatever he was, whatever it all meant, Dimas wanted to be part of it. With a surge of untaught faith, Dimas asked Jesus for something he could hardly have understood: "Remember me."

It is possible to have faith, even in things we don't understand. True, we may regularly struggle with doubt when it comes to historical faith-claims that we cannot verify. But faith in Christ is not faith in a fact, it's faith in a person. His presence inexplicably speaks from heart to heart. It elicits an intense desire to be near him, and an outpouring of love, trust, allegiance, and gratitude. The person who has experienced this presence can continue having faith in the beloved Christ, even when doubts about facts dance and mock. The fact-faith of other believers, the immense Body of Christ that transcends time, helps the individual ride out the storm.

But Dimas would not have had that even that help; he had nothing but the memory of words spoken by a man now utterly still. Perhaps no one in Christian history has had his faith tested as searingly. Some saints have spoken of feeling abandoned by God; Dimas experienced that abandonment in the most literal way. Yet the Church holds him to be a saint solely because of his faith. Dimas had not cared for the poor or spent himself in fasting. He had not led a moral life, had not

*Cont. on page 10*



Vatra Românească / June 30 - July 2, 2006

## HOTELS



### HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS

1540 Commerce Park Dr, Chelsea MI 48118  
(734) 433.1600

Rate: **\$89.99** (singles/doubles)  
Deadline: **May 30**

Features: Indoor pool, breakfast, fitness room,  
nearby restaurants & shopping, high speed internet



### FAIRFIELD INN by Marriott

2395 Shirley Dr, Jackson MI 49202  
(517) 784.7877

Rate: **\$70.00** (singles/doubles)  
Deadline: **May 30**

Features: Indoor pool, Breakfast, nearby restaurants,  
high speed internet



### BAYMONT INN

2035 Holiday Inn Dr, Jackson MI 49202  
(517) 789.6000

Rate: **\$65.00** (singles/doubles)  
Deadline: **June 16**

Features: Breakfast, nearby restaurants



### COUNTRY HEARTH INN

1111 Boardman Rd, Jackson MI 49202  
(517) 783.6404

Rate: **\$58.00** (standard) **\$55.00** (economy)  
Deadline: **June 8**

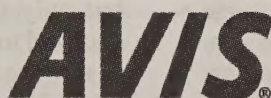
Features: Breakfast, nearby restaurants & shopping

The 2006 Episcopate Congress weekend will begin with the Episcopate Council Meeting on Thursday evening, followed by the Congress Sessions on Friday and Saturday, and will conclude with the Banquet following the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy on Sunday.

## TRANSPORTATION

Delegates and guests are advised that the Episcopate Chancery is not able to provide any transportation from or to airports or hotels. Please arrange your own transportation needs prior to arrival.

### Car Rental from Detroit Metropolitan Airport



We are pleased to announce that special rental arrangements and *discounted* pricing have again been made with **AVIS RENT-A-CAR** so that

Episcopate Congress attendees have reasonable access to transportation throughout the weekend.

For more information, or to make your reservations today, call them at 1(800)331.1600, or visit their website online at [www.avis.com](http://www.avis.com).

You must give them the ROEA Avis Worldwide Discount (AWD) Code # **J867318** to receive the discounted rates.

## HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS

To provide delegates and guests with ample time to arrange hotel accommodations, we have blocked rooms at four hotels in the area. You must mention you are with **"the ROEA Group"** when making your reservation in order to receive the special discounted price.

Room availability is limited. We **strongly** urge you to reserve your rooms before the deadline indicated for each hotel. After the deadline, rates may still be available but availability is **not** guaranteed. Some hotel prices are subject to change without notice. Other types of rooms may also be available. Ask hotel for details.

*Do not delay...make your reservations EARLY!*

### NEW HOTEL LOCATION ADDED THIS YEAR . . .

The *Holiday Inn Express* is located in Chelsea (East of Grass Lake; I-94 exit 159). It is the same distance from the Vatra as the Jackson hotels, and may be more convenient for those traveling from Detroit Metropolitan Airport and locations East of Grass Lake.

(Please note: We are unable to host lodging or camping on the Vatra grounds.)



# A GOSPEL IN THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS?

By Fr. Theodore G. Stylianopoulos

Casting Judas not as a culpable betrayer, but as an intimate friend and collaborator of Jesus, the recently announced *Gospel of Judas* has understandably generated a stir. However, what the ancient document says about Jesus is even more controversial. According to this *Gospel*, Jesus was a bearer of a deep secret that apparently he revealed to no other disciple except Judas; and then got his help to die that his spirit may be released to some heavenly realm. Recruited for this purpose, Judas then *betrays* the Master as an act of intimate friendship. This is heady stuff. Does the Gospel of Judas cast doubts on the accounts of the four traditional Gospels and, implicitly, on all early Christianity?

The fact that the Gospel of Judas has been authenticated as belonging to the third century, the original written about a century earlier, does not of course mean what it says is true. St. Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 180 AD) knew about it and denounced it as heresy. Many other Church Fathers and theologians have, before and after Irenaeus, refuted the same kind of thinking found in dozens of similar documents which distorted the apostolic faith. Scholars have called that religious ideology Gnosticism, a phenomenon that flourished mainly in the second century and created serious problems for the Church. Since the late 1940's, when a slew of them were found buried in the dry sands of Egypt, scholars have been able to study these document first hand.

In the National Geographic documentary featuring the Gospel of Judas, biblical scholar Craig Evans, near the end of the film, bluntly stated that nothing new and nothing historically authentic is to be found in the document. Although the documentary leaned to the opposite view, most scholars will probably agree with Evans. The Gospel of Judas is but another small window to Gnosticism, a hodgepodge of religious speculations that exploded on the scene during the second century. At that time, individual intellectuals or small and elitist groups around them, bothered by the basic story of the Bible, especially the *violent* God of the Old Testament and the *scandalous* death and resurrection of Jesus, generated their own religious philosophy. They combined Jewish, Christian and pagan elements to construct literally fantastic systems of speculation including astrology and magic. The core theme, found in the Gospel of Judas, is secret knowledge (gnosis) that leads to salvation.

What was that secret knowledge about? It was essentially about the Gnostic system itself that roughly runs as follows: A higher god, infinitely superior to the God of the Old Testament, sends periodic illuminators to earth with a secret message to draw back to heaven the inner divine sparks of receptive human

beings hopelessly caught in utter darkness. According to this worldview, the Old Testament God is an inferior and ignorant God, responsible for creating the lowest sphere of existence, the earth, where all the evil of the cosmos had dredged. Material things, including human bodies, if not evil, are the seat of evil, and to be escaped from. So in Gnostic thinking the eternal Christ, who was the son of the higher god and not the Son of the God of the Old Testament, could not truly have taken human flesh. Instead, he temporarily entered into Jesus at his baptism and later, at some point during his arrest and suffering, left the material body and returned to the sphere of light.

In the Gnostic system, the saving death and resurrection of Christ play no role and they are usually entirely omitted. The one killed is not the Son of God, but only the human Jesus, whose body presumably decayed to dust. What is decisive for the Gnostic view is not the person of Jesus the Christ, crucified and risen, but the Gnostic *gospel* itself, that is, the message of the secret Gnostic system. This system was thought to provide the key to a kind of self-salvation through self-knowledge and self-realization in the discovery of the inner divine self.

What's wrong with all this? The whole thing. That Jesus passed on a single secret to a single intimate collaborator is immensely absurd. Jesus conducted an open ministry addressing his message to all and publicly conflicting with religious leaders over such issues as the Sabbath observance, the ritual washing of hands, and the temple activities. Not even radical critics would deny essential truth in these words of Jesus: *I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together; I have said nothing secretly* (John 18:20). The events of the early Church and its astonishing mission, reported in the Book of Acts, were *not done in a corner*, St. Paul pointedly observed (Acts 26:26). Against the Gospel of Judas, none of the New Testament books, all written in the first century, give any hint that early Christianity was all about elites conveying secrets to elites. The *mysteries* of God's kingdom proclaimed by Jesus (Matthew 13:11) were not about objective teachings, such as *love your enemies* and many others like it in the Sermon on the Mount. These were taught to all, disciples and the crowds. Rather, the mystery of God's kingdom, both then and today, is the same: it is the personal experience of grace and forgiveness arising in human hearts from hearing about God's rule and living by the gospel.

The Gospel of Judas turns Christianity on its head. Long ago St. Irenaeus accused the Gnostics of using the Bible as a mosaic from which they extracted se-



lected tiles and created a wholly different portrait of Christ, turning, as he said, the portrait of the king into that of a fox! The Christian gospel puts Christ at the center of the salvation message and proclaims a true incarnation, a true death, and true resurrection by which of sinners are redeemed from the power of sin and enjoy a new life of grace in obedience to Christ. Contrary to the Gnostic message, the Christian gospel is rooted in the Old Testament as part of the saving plan of the only true God and Father of Jesus Christ. St. Paul declares that there is only one Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9) and that he and all the numerous eye-witnesses to the risen Christ preach the same Gospel of the crucified, buried and risen Lord (1 Cor. 15:1-11). In view of the testimony of these eyewitnesses, many of whom had actually walked with Jesus, only a fool would attribute any credibility to a strange document written one hundred fifty years later.

Let readers be aware that there can be no compromise here. One cannot choose parts from the traditional Gospels and parts from the Gospel of Judas. The two versions of salvation by their very nature negate each other. They are not two alternative, more or less acceptable, takes on what authentic Christianity was and is. The Gnostic gospel proclaims Christ as a kind of disembodied messenger who opposes the work of the Old Testament God. The Christian gospel proclaims an incarnate, crucified, and risen Christ in complete harmony with the same God who is his Father. The Gnostic message views the human body as virtually evil, something to discard. The Christian message holds the human body as holy, redeemable, destined for glorious transformation through resurrection. The Gnostic way of salvation is one of inward meditation toward self-realization. The Christian way of salvation is taking up the cross in obedience to Christ and in communion with his body, the Church, which has a vital mission in part to work for justice and peace in this world that God loves. When the two interpretative perspectives are assessed as wholes, the historical and theological evidence clearly favors the Christian option as being the most faithful to the message of the Bible and worthy of life-long commitment.

What about Judas' betrayal? The betrayal was not as decisive for Jesus' death as one might think. Jesus' enemies would have gotten to him one way or another. Jesus did not, of course, need Judas' help to die, if Jesus' wanted to do that, because he could have surrendered to the authorities himself. The idea that Jesus was looking to die is totally refuted by the experience of Gethsemane in which Jesus with distress and tears prayed three times to be spared the cross.

The betrayal of Judas is significant in its moral (rather immoral) immensity. Yet, why did Judas betray Jesus? Was it envy, greed, an attempt to force Jesus' hand toward revolution against the Romans, or even an attempt at a reconciliation meeting with the

religious leaders for the common national good? No little attention in print and film has been given to such questions, and it is no sin. The vilification of Judas in Christian history is lamentable. For Christians, the right response to all sinners, including ourselves, is sorrow and prayer in the spirit of Christ's love who forgave his crucifiers. What a magnificent testimony to God's forgiveness, if Judas, like Peter, had repented of his misdeed and run up to Jesus as he stumbled up the hill to Golgotha and asked for mercy! Forgiveness would have been certain. But it was not to be. Falling into despair on account of his betrayal, Judas killed himself, an act that would otherwise have no reasonable explanation, unless one is prepared to adopt the Gnostic system and see Judas as committing suicide to release his own soul to astral regions.

Who has the story right? The second-century Gnostics with their new-fangled speculations, or the earliest Christians who provided the traditions behind the four Gospels? If it were not a culpable betrayal, why would early Christians want to create and perpetuate an embarrassing story about one of the twelve disciples handing over his Master to the enemies? To reverse morally the betrayal into an act of friendship seems utterly ludicrous.

The crux of the fuss has to do with the value wars in the second as well as the twenty-first centuries. Over recent centuries, the failings of Christians and institutional Christianity, wars and all, have caused offense to many intellectuals who have consequently looked elsewhere for answers. Out of frustration and sometimes hatred, some have even proposed and have actively sought either radically to revise or even wholly to destroy traditional Christianity. They have wanted to throw out the proverbial baby with the water. This sort of thing is both regrettable and unacceptable. The institutional Church ought to be fully transparent and get its act together for an effective mission in the world. However, a radically revised Christianity is no Christianity at all, but only a fake shadow of it, unworthy of support. One must also consider that the despisers of Christianity have not come up with some viable communal alternative that works.

The ancient Gnostics seem to have been gripped by similar frustrations and anger. The pain of an unjust and violent world led the Gnostics to the dreamy ideal of escaping from reality instead of facing it. They thought to find self-redemption in meditative self-absorption and the construction of ethereal speculative systems, rather than by following the way of the cross and martyrdom as adherents of apostolic Christianity did. Part of the spiritual revolt of the Gnostics, so it seems, was to attack basic teachings of the Bible and the Church. And what crazy stuff it was that some came up with. The Naassenes or Ophites (the respective words in Hebrew and Greek mean *snake*) venerated the deceiving serpent of Genesis thought to have the wisdom of the superior god against the plan of the

*Cont. on page 9*



# ARCHPASTORAL MESSAGE OF METROPOLITAN HERMAN

April 9, 2006  
Fifth Sunday of Lent  
Saint Mary of Egypt

Esteemed Brother Hierarchs, Devoted Clergy and Monastics, and Beloved Faithful:

Our holy Orthodox Tradition presents Great Lent as the sacred season for us to live more fully the call of the Christian “way of life” in imitation of our Savior – to be more Christ-like, to come closer to God Himself. It is a time for us to pray more fervently, to fast more strictly, to give alms more generously, and to repent, confess our sins and forgive one another in order that we may be forgiven by our Heavenly Father. In doing these things in the name of the Lord, we will be made worthy to attain unto and worship the holy Resurrection.

This year’s Lenten journey to Holy Pascha in our Orthodox Church in America has been marred by serious questions regarding the financial accountability of the Central Church Administration. The quest for truth and accountability, the necessity of maintaining honesty and integrity in church administration, and the restoration of trust at all levels are good and noble and virtuous. But these questions have escalated into criticisms, allegations and discord that have ripped the very fibers of our Holy Church, tearing asunder the peace and love and unity among her pious children. They have become the source of divisions and scandal, to the detriment of the Church’s prestige and good name – in public venues, from the internet in individual homes to the front pages of major newspapers across the country.

It is time for this turmoil in our parishes, in our dioceses and throughout the Church to cease and desist, especially as we approach Holy Week. We must lay aside these earthly cares and re-focus our spiritual lives on the *“one thing that is needed ... that good part, which will not be taken away”* (Luke 10:42). We must concentrate our efforts on prayer and fasting, almsgiving, and repentance, confession and mutual forgiveness. We must heed the call of the Holy Apostle: *“How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”* (Hebrews 2:3).

Beyond our own spiritual lives, the glorious work of Christ’s Church must continue. The tasks of illuminating and baptizing catechumens, renewing parish life and growth, theologically educating and spiritually forming future clergy in our seminaries, and planting missions in places where there are no churches must continue until Christ comes again. Our faith must be strong enough to overcome every challenge, trusting totally in His promise: *“I will build My Church,*

*and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:18).

The work of resolving this controversy has begun on behalf of our whole Church. A law firm has been retained to undertake an internal investigation of all allegations regarding the finances of the Church that have been brought to my attention. An independent audit of all accounts for the past two years, an examination of the disposition of all monies collected through appeals for the past five years, and an evaluation of chancery personnel and operations have all been initiated and will be ongoing. As Primate of the Church, I pledge to you that my office, the Holy Synod of Bishops, the Metropolitan Council and the Chancery staff will cooperate fully with the auditors and investigators until these issues are resolved. As the independent audits for 2004 and for the special appeals are completed, they will be made available on our OCA website in a manner similar to those of other government-regulated not-for-profit religious organizations. Additional audit reports as well as the results of the internal investigation will also become part of our public records when deemed appropriate to do so by the investigators. The Holy Synod of Bishops, the Metropolitan Council, and then all of you will be made aware of the findings in a timely fashion and with good order.

I have further initiated “Best Practices” procedures in financial accountability and other administrative practices established for not-for-profit religious institutions, in order to insure that mistakes will not be made in the future. I realize that for some, these measures were taken too late; for others, they are too severe. I know that whatever decisions I make, I cannot please everyone.

I wish to state unequivocally that I take full responsibility for what may have happened during my service as Primate of the Church. The Holy Apostle commands me as first hierarch of the Church *“that you should set in order the things that are wanting”* (Titus 1:5). If I have failed in any way to do that, I ask for your forgiveness and God’s guidance to enable me to undertake whatever corrective measures may still be necessary. To all those who have been scandalized and pained by the weaknesses of the human aspect of the Church, and to all those whose faith has been challenged because of it, I apologize with my whole heart. I beseech the Lord, the divine Head of the Church, to heal and strengthen these members of His Body through His mercy and compassion and love for mankind.

Again, I ask for your understanding and forgiveness.  
*Cont. on page 9*



# A Gospel

*Cont. from page 7*

Old Testament God! Other Gnostics advocated three, seven, nine, thirty or thirty-three levels of divinity. Marcion, an extreme ascetic who saw evil in matter, allowed only single people in his communities. He prohibited marriage and childbearing because, in his view, such practices aided the work of the inferior creator god. And so Marcion condemned his own congregations to eventual extinction.

These examples may show that it is not the case, as some loudly claim today, that oppressive bishops and a rigid Church suppressed the Gnostics. For centuries the Church was under persecution and had no social or political power to oppress anyone. Naturally the leaders and theologians of the Church were concerned to maintain the apostolic traditions and therefore they disciplined their own communicants. However, any person or group outside the Church, or cast out of the Church, had the same opportunity to flourish in their choices. The decline of Gnostic groups was chiefly due to the inability of their own message and practice to draw and keep adherents. Christianity triumphed not because of its rigid administrative or theological systems, but because it served the needs and hopes of many who were willing to make the costly commitment to the apostolic gospel.

In modern democratic societies, individuals and groups have equal opportunity to promote their ideologies and practices. The promise of success is open to all. Let God's truth be served in providing real solutions for the real problems of humanity by means of example and persuasion. In the cauldron of the current cultural war, it is no surprise that people would differ as radically as people did in the second century and still regard themselves as Christians. Some continue to teach that Jesus' transformed bodily resurrection is an unnecessary myth, despite the protestations of St. Paul (1 Corinthians, chapter 15). Others advocate same gender marriage despite the witness of the Scriptures, all of the historical wisdom and the drastic social implications. Still others have supported almost limitless destruction of the unborn as if only the will and convenience of the potential parent really counts. And many caught up in the spirit of the age, whether consciously or unconsciously, follow the post-modern message of looking for the *real* self, finding one's way, creating one's own truth, and doing one's own thing — while still claiming to follow Christ. For such persons, the Gospel of Judas may perhaps be of considerable value. For many others, however, it is no *gospel* at all.

*Rev. Dr. Theodore G. Stylianopoulos is the Archbishop Iakovos Professor of Orthodox Theology and Professor of New Testament at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology Brookline, Mass.*

*Published by OrthodoxyToday.org on April 20, 2006*

# Archpastoral

*Cont. from page 8*

ness, and for your prayers for myself, for the hierarchs of our Holy Synod, for our clergy and for all our faithful. The time has come for us to unite our efforts to restore peace and harmony in our Church. If we are to become the co-workers with Christ that we are called to be, we must place our focus on our Savior, His saving mission and our shared participation in that saving mission. We must direct our energies to the work to which each of us has been called: our own salvation and the salvation of those around us.

If a loved one in your family were suffering in pain or ravaged by some disease, each of you would come to their aid with every possible human and spiritual resource. Our Holy Mother, the Church, has been ravaged by an illness that has taken a serious toll. I implore you, as her children, to do all that you can to help restore her to wellness and strength, beauty and dignity, purity and holiness. She is the Bride of Christ whom He loves, for whom He gave His life "*... that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish*" (Ephesians 5:27). Now is the time for us to restore our Holy Mother to wholeness with our love.

Shortly before His saving Passion and Death on the Cross, Christ prayed to His Heavenly Father for His Church: "*... that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me*" (John 17:21). His prayer was not only for those twelve Apostles present around the table of the Mystical Supper; it is for all the members of our Orthodox Church in America today. Orthodoxy is living proof that the power of a unified witness can save the world with which it comes into contact. More importantly, it can save our part of the world right around us. As we relive the events of our salvation this coming Holy Week, let us lay aside what has divided our Church and ourselves, and let us commend ourselves and each other and all our life to Christ our God and to the work of saving souls to which we have been called. May He help us and strengthen us and bless our every good effort.

Asking for your prayers and wishing you a spiritually rewarding Passion Week and a joyous celebration of Holy Pascha, I bestow my archpastoral blessings and with paternal love, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

**+ HERMAN**

Archbishop of Washington and New York  
Metropolitan of All America and Canada



# MUSEUM-ARCHIVE ADDITION AT VATRA

The Episcopate Office is busy preparing for the beginning of construction of an addition to the present Chancery Administration Building on the East side of Grey Tower Road. This North Wing is being built with space for a museum to house an accumulation of Episcopate artifacts, some of which were gathered from the Episcopate patrimony, others from parishes, and others from individuals. Cost for the construction of the 3,385 square foot addition will be covered by a benefactor of the Episcopate.

The original plans for the Chancery Administration Building included the North Wing, but due to financial restrictions, it was not possible for this wing to be constructed. The addition will be of the same external materials as the existing building and the facade will match the South Wing. The entrance to the museum will be through the George R. and Martha Gavrilă Grand Hall which unites the Rucsanda and Corneliu Bota Administrative Center with the North Wing.

The architect of the original project, Mrs. Susan Nelson Kougias of Southwater Architects, Ltd., Chicago, Illinois, has accepted to revise the original plans to accommodate to the purpose of a museum display area and archive/storage area.

Three final bidders presented their acceptance of the task and the O'Harrow Construction Company of Jackson, Michigan, was awarded the project. Mr. Mark Chestnut, Episcopate Financial Administrator and Assistant Treasurer, assisted by Rev. Hieromonk Calinic Berger, facilitated the bidding process which included providing the bidders with Architectural Blueprints and Project Manuel. Mr. Chestnut will be the contact between the Architect, the Contractor and Project Manager.

Over the decades, both His Eminence, Valerian and His Eminence, Nathaniel, have accepted numerous ecclesiastical artifacts from various parishes which closed or which simply wanted to share some of their patrimony with the rest of the Episcopate. Large wood candelabra, chivots (wooden tabernacles), icons, banners, processional items and vestments will make up part of the display. Romanian costumes, stergari (woven runners), pottery and wood objects will also be included, giving special attention to items made by members of the American-Romanian community.

The enlarged Archive/Storage area will house a collection of old liturgical books, theological reviews, Solia Calendar photographs, and particular archival information. The bound copies of the Solia Newspaper and Calendars will be housed there as will the large inventory of publications. The records of the Department of Finance will also included there for storage. Museum items not on display, plus the Tait

## The Cross

*Cont. from page 4*

made restitution for his wrongs, and had not conquered heights of prayer. He wasn't even baptized. But he looked at Jesus and loved him. And that was enough.

Even as we celebrate the Resurrection, where Death is trampled and sorrow is no more, we can still see the other cross, standing next to Christ's. On that cross Dimas' faith was exposed to the fiercest battering that doubt can deal. He could represent all those who find themselves inexplicably drawn to Christ, yet sometimes find it hard to believe.

Doubters are sprinkled throughout the Gospels, as if God had hidden them there for our reassurance. St. Thomas said that he would not believe the Resurrection until he'd seen and touched the risen Christ, and Jesus graciously met his need. When the eleven apostles saw the risen Christ on a mountaintop, St. Matthew tells us, even then "some doubted" (Matthew 28:17). And at the bottom of the Orthodox icon of the Nativity, we see Joseph looking worried as he listens to an aged shepherd. This is the Devil, and he is tempting Joseph to doubt the Virgin Birth. In the center of the icon the Virgin Mary Theotokos is not looking down at her baby, but is gazing out toward her spouse with compassion, as if she is holding him up in prayer. There are many in the course of Christian history who have had to pray with the father who begged Jesus to heal his son: "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)

God himself completes our unbelief. This is the lesson of the cross of Dimas, which bears its own humble witness alongside the Cross of Christ. Even if Dimas' faith was fragile, it was sufficient, because Christ himself completed it. As the ancient Orthodox hymn of Holy Thursday says, it was the Lord himself who made Dimas worthy of Paradise "in a single moment":

"The Wise Thief didst Thou make worthy of Paradise, in a single moment, O Lord. By the wood of thy Cross illumine me as well, and save me."

*Published by Beliefnet, April 19, 2006.*

## MOVING?

Send your old and new addresses to:  
ROEA, PO BOX 185  
GRASS LAKE, MI 49240 USA  
or e-mail to: [solia@roea.org](mailto:solia@roea.org)

art collection will be stored there.

The project is scheduled for completion by June 25, 2006.



# CHURCH GROWTH: WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

By Pearl Homiak

*In order to be faithful Orthodox Christians each of us should be asking ourselves, "How am I helping to fulfill God's universal vision?" — Fr. Luke Veronis, Missionary Priest*

Twenty-one years ago a few brave souls in Chicago's south suburbs took a daring risk. Desiring an all-English parish, they left the comfort zones of their established Orthodox parishes and struck out on their own. Thus, St. Luke parish was born. Over the years the parish has grown so that it now includes more than 100 adult parishioners of various ages and many nationalities. Today, we are thriving - or are we?

The life of any parish follows a pretty predictable cycle. The dreams, excitement, and missionary fervor of the parish founders last for a few years. This zeal, however, fades as the parish matures, establishes various programs and ministries, and settles into a routine.

Everyone gets comfortable, and there is a general sense of "We're doing great!" Yet, many parishioners have ceased praying daily, hardly ever read the Bible and other spiritual books, and rarely (if ever) share Orthodoxy with their non-Orthodox friends and neighbors. At this point the parish has reached a plateau, and this can be a dangerous place.

Once a parish plateaus, only one of two things can happen: it can surge forward with renewed vigor, or it can begin to decline as it strives to maintain the church as is. St. Luke parish is now at this plateau. The rapid growth of the early days has settled to a point where, over the last several years, new members have generally only offset those who leave (including our college-age children).

The parishioners of St. Luke are friendly and openly welcome visitors. But is this all we need to do? Is this enough to increase our membership and bring our post-college children back to St. Luke as active members when they marry and start their own families? In essence, does St. Luke parish have high enough quality to increase its quantity? And what do we mean when we talk about quality?

Ten years ago a theological student in Germany became curious about this quality issue. Amid the myriad of prevailing church growth techniques and methods, he began to wonder if healthy (i.e., consistently growing) churches had any unique characteristics. So he developed a survey and sent it to 1000 churches of various types and sizes on five continents. He discovered that there were, indeed, several characteristics common to growing churches and, in addition, these characteristics are always present in healthy churches.

The characteristics include: empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship service, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships. Furthermore, if a church reaches a quality index of 65 (per the survey's scoring) in all eight areas, the church will grow "all by itself." Amazingly, these exact same characteristics are consistently present in healthy parishes even after 40,000 more churches on six continents have taken this survey. Does St. Luke parish embody these eight characteristics, and if so, to what degree?

Although we have done surveys at St. Luke in the past, these were somewhat superficial and limited to our own ideas. Also, there was no basis on which to compare our results to see if they were meaningful and useful. The quality-dependent survey, however, is highly statistically accurate and has 1.4 million answers to which we can compare ours.

The survey is a product of Natural Church Development (NCD), an organization that specializes in quality church growth. NCD is neither a "magic bullet" nor a "cookie-cutter approach" to growing a church. NCD simply provides the resources and guidance for growing each church as God wants it to grow. In essence, the NCD program helps parishioners rediscover Biblical precepts and relate them to everyday life, which, in turn, improves the quality of the church. The quality-based survey and other NCD resources can make our efforts more successful than if we just try to do this on our own. (Actually, God grows churches; we don't. However, we have an important role in this growth).

Several Orthodox parishes in our OCA Midwest Diocese (as well as other dioceses) are already well into the NCD process, and all of them speak positively about it and plan on continuing with it. The survey results have been inspiring and energizing for these churches' current parishioners, and they are seeing both qualitative and quantitative results. Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff, an OCA priest is trained to administer the NCD survey and to coach Orthodox parishes through the NCD process. He is currently working with these Midwest Diocese parishes, and he can work with us, too. And, by the way, Archbishop Job fully supports NCD.

Lest you think, "We don't need this," ask yourself this question: What is the median age of the adult parishioners of St. Luke parish? (Think about this, and then take a guess. The answer is the same number as the highway that goes west from Joliet to

*Cont. on page 17*



# INTRODUCING A FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE PARISH EVANGELISM

How many times has your parish's Evangelism Committee gathered for a meeting a struggled with its purpose? The newest member of the committee asks: **"What is an evangelism committee supposed to do?"** Seasoned committee veterans attempt answers, but often discover they just aren't sure what evangelism is.

**Evangelism is effective** when parishes have a primary focus on reaching out in mission and ministry beyond their current membership to the unchurched and unbaptized in their communities. Churches with this vision encourage their members in the single most effective strategy for outreach: *Members inviting others they know to come and experience the ministries of the church and mysteries of the faith.*

**"Invitational" evangelism is at the heart of growing parishes**, no matter what their ministry setting.

Your evangelism committee can encourage and support your members in their ministries of outreach and witness by focusing its planning efforts on four key areas of parish evangelism: Hospitality and Response, Discipleship and Incorporation, Intentional Neighborhood Outreach and Communication Evangelism.

These **four areas of evangelism ministry are offered** as a "easy-to-grasp picture" of the programmatic possibilities for evangelization in a parish setting. Their value is that they uncomplicated evangelism ministry by suggesting four functional, manageable programmatic areas for your committee's focus. They provide a framework and job-description around which your committee can organize its efforts.

## Hospitality and Response Evangelism

The Divine Liturgy is often the first contact people have with a prospective church home. Hospitality and response evangelism asks questions about how you receive and welcome guests:

- How are people greeted and acknowledged?
- Are your worship resources sensitive to seekers or others unfamiliar with Orthodox Christian worship?
- How inviting are your building and grounds?
- Is there a nursery and how are children welcomed to participate?
- How are guests welcomed after the Liturgy?

Parishes concerned about this area of evangelism may offer training for greeters, ushers, and outreach teams who follow-up on first-time worship guests. They may consider hosting monthly or quarterly "Bring-A-Friend-To-Church" Sundays or institute a permanent nametag system for members of the parish.

## Discipleship and Incorporation Evangelism

This emphasis of evangelism ministry focuses on nurturing the new members into the life of your parish and deepening the faith and commitment of all your members. Possibilities for programming include:

- New member orientations, sponsor and receptions.
- Opportunities for small group gatherings focused on discipleship, nurture, prayer, Bible study, and life support concerns.
- The establishment of personal caring or telephone ministry directed toward active and inactive members of your congregation.

## Intentional Outreach to Non-Members

This area of evangelism ministry asks: "Who are the unchurched and unbaptized in our community?" and "How can we reach them with an invitation to faith and discipleship?" Evangelism activities with this focus may include:

- A door-to-door or telephone canvass of your community.
- Personal witness training for your members.
- Establishing an after-school program, day care/preschool center, or a summer day camp program.
- Social ministry programs.
- Greeting new residents to your community with "new neighbor" packets.
- Beginning a new worship service targeted to a constituency of neighbors you feel called to reach.

## Evangelism Through Communication Ministries

This area of evangelism ministry encourages evaluation of the quality of your internal and external communications. You may consider doing an annual assessment of the effectiveness of your parish's communication systems. Items of focus include:

- Calling brochures.
- Visitor-friendly newsletters and bulletins.
- Inviting and attractive church signs.
- Use of news releases and print ads.
- Development of radio and cable television ministries.
- Direct mail campaigns to the community.
- Development of a well-designed web site.

©2006, *Directions to Orthodoxy*. Posted on [directionstoorthodoxy.org](http://directionstoorthodoxy.org) on March 7, 2006.



# A.R.F.O.R.A. CONGRESS CONVOCAATION

In conformity with Article II, Section 2 of the By-Laws, we hereby convoke the

## 58<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL ARFORA CONGRESS

+NATHANIEL, Archbishop

Adela Price  
President

Eugenia Tirmonia  
Secretary

JUNE 2-4, 2006

Hosted by: Presentation of Our Lord Orthodox Church, 3365 Ridgewood Rd., Fairlawn, Ohio - (330) 666-8054.

### Schedule of Events

#### Friday, June 2

3:00 pm – 5:30 pm	Executive Board Meeting @ Hotel
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm	Registration/Reception for Clergy, Preotese, Delegates and Past Presidents @ Hotel

#### Saturday, June 3

8:00 am – 9:00 am	Breakfast and Registration
9:00 am – 12:00 noon	Congress Session begins
12:00 noon – 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Guest Speaker
1:30 pm – 4:00 pm	Congress Reconvenes
4:15 pm – 5:15 pm	Parastas / Great Vespers
5:30 pm – 6:00 pm	Photographs in Church
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm	Dinner & Program

#### Sunday, June 4

9:00 am	Matins
9:45 am	Entrance / Vesting of Hierarchy
10:00 am	Hierarchal Divine Liturgy
12:30 pm	Brunch and Farewell

**Hotel:** Four Points Sheraton – Akron West, 3150 W. Market St., Akron, OH 44333. \$75 + tax / night. Mention: “58<sup>th</sup> ARFORA Convention” for special discounted rate. For reservations, call: 800-325-3535 or 330-869-9000. MAKE RESERVATIONS NO LATER THAN MAY 19, 2006.

**Directions:** To Presentation Church – I-77 to Ridgewood Rd. Exit. Head West. Go 1-2 miles – church on right (north) side. To Four Points Sheraton – I-77 to West Market St. Exit (Route 18). Go East. Hotel on right across from Summit Mall (3-4 miles). To Presentation Church from Hotel – Turn right on West Market (east). Turn right onto Miller Rd. (south).

## FINANCIAL REPORT

### EPISCOPATE SUPPORTERS

Olivia Dickerman, Ypsilanti, MI .....	\$250.00
Audrey Huston, Michigan Center, MI .....	\$200.00
Marina M Ficken, McLean, VA .....	\$100.00
Psa Eugenia Cerghizan, Vadnais Heights, MN ...	\$50.00
Florence Brott, Austintown, OH .....	\$25.00
Helen Popa, Youngstown, OH .....	\$20.00

### EPISCOPATE ASSESSMENT (DUES)

Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL .....	\$27,200.00
Holy Trinity, Miramar, FL .....	\$5,100.00
Decent of the Holy Spirit, Oregon City, OR ...	\$4,500.00
St Nicholas, Troy, MI .....	\$3,000.00
St John, Phoenix, AZ .....	\$2,040.00
St Elias, Inglis, MB .....	\$690.00
Holy Cross, Hermitage, PA (for 2007) .....	\$500.00
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Middle Village, NY .....	\$60.00

### GENERAL DONATIONS

Fred & Patricia Klus, Wixom, MI .....	\$50.00
Florence & Bobby Westerfield, Warren, MI .....	\$30.00
Dita Sandru, Southfield, MI .....	\$10.00

### MEMORIAM

Anna Serbu, Detroit, MI .....	\$25.00
(IMO Husband, Ely Serbu)	

### HIERARCHS TRAVEL FUND

St Philothea Mission, Hagerstown, MD .....	\$548.22
--------------------------------------------	----------

### DEPARTMENT OF MISSIONS

St Nicholas, Montreal, QC .....	\$2,580.00
(Mission Assessment)	
St John, Denver, CO .....	\$1,110.00
(Mission Assessment)	
Sts Michael & Gabriel, Apopka, FL .....	\$960.00
(Mission Assessment)	
St Paraschiva, Avondale, AZ .....	\$480.00
(Mission Assessment)	

### DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

National A.R.O.Y. ....	\$1,600.00
(Young Men's Retreat)	

### DEPARTMENT OF CHRISTIAN ASSISTANCE

Societatea Marasesti, Garden City, MI .....	\$50.00
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## SOLIA CALENDAR 2006

The *Solia Calendar 2006* was mailed the week of April 17. All *Solia* readers should receive their copies by the end of the month. We hope that you enjoy this edition featuring the Romanian contribution to Mount Athos. Contact [calendar@roea.org](mailto:calendar@roea.org) or (517) 522-3656 for more information.

Turn right onto Ridgewood Rd. (Miller Rd. ends into I-77 ramp – do not enter I-77). Church on right (north) 1-2 miles.



# VISITING A MONASTERY: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

by Nichola Toda Krause  
Orthodox Family Life

The holy, monastic communities of Mt. Athos in Greece may form the spiritual center of the Orthodox world through their vigilant prayer and teaching, but every monastery can enrich the spiritual life of its "local" community of Orthodox faithful, whether that community is right down the street, a day's drive away, or across the world on the Internet.

In western Pennsylvania and northeast Ohio, we are blessed to be in close proximity to three Orthodox monasteries, each with a unique spiritual environment. We are able to interact often with their monks and nuns at pan-Orthodox seminars and services held throughout the year, at our own parishes' services and ethnic festivals to which they are often invited, and at the monasteries themselves.

The Monastery of St. John the Theologian (Hiram, Ohio), regularly opens its doors to our parish's youth group for weekend camp-out retreats. The monks spend several hours leading nature walks and talking with the teens in the guest house living room or around an outdoor bonfire after services. It is an enriching, enjoyable experience for monastics, teens, and chaperones alike! The other monasteries do the same type of thing for their diocesan parishes' youth groups, women's groups, and adult study groups.

Whether you live near a monastery or not, setting aside a portion of your family's vacation time each year to visit a monastery is an excellent way to help children establish positive role models and spark in them an interest in monasticism. When children see monks and nuns showing obedience and humility, cheerfully serving others, and spending long, joyous hours in prayer, they better understand how our Faith can be lived every day.

Here are some basic rules of etiquette for visiting a monastic community with your family or parish group, based on our experience:

- Call ahead to introduce yourself and ask the permission of the Abbott or Abbess for your visit, and tell him or her who is coming with you, when you plan to arrive, how long you wish to stay, and why you wish to come. You may find that the monastery is closed for the day (i.e., for the first week of Great Lent, so that the monastics may pray without interruptions), that several members of the community are traveling, or that alternate directions are needed because of road construction.
- If you will be at the monastery for more than a single service and/or a meal, ask in advance if there is anything you may do to help while you are there, so you can bring appropriate clothes and supplies,

if needed. You may be able to help with gardening, baking or canning, decorating the Church, cleaning, painting fences or shrines, etc. Most monasteries have so much spiritual, Church-related work to do that help with chores is welcome. (Last week, our almost-four-year-old Katie helped a monk at St. Gregory Palamas Monastery (Hayesville, Ohio) plant onion sets in the newly-tilled garden. Both enjoyed the work and the fellowship, and the rows are almost straight!)

- Do not arrive empty-handed! It is appropriate to bring a small present for the monastery with you, regardless of the length of your stay. (Nasa Phyllis often takes freshly-baked pita bread from a local bakery whenever she visits the monastery, but other good gifts include olive oil, fresh fruits and vegetables, a home-baked bread or cake, a new cassette tape of liturgical music, etc.)
- When you arrive, greet the Abbot or Abbess of the monastery as you would greet a priest: approach them and bow, touching the floor with your right hand, then cross your hands right over left with palms upward and say, "Bless, Father" or "Bless, Mother". The Abbot or Abbess will bless you with the sign of the Cross, say "Let us bless the Lord.", and place his or her hand over yours, so that you may kiss it in respect. (All Orthodox monks are addressed as "Father", whether they are ordained as priests or not. Likewise, nuns are addressed as "Mother". Only male and female novices or rasophores are called "Brother" and "Sister", respectively.)
- Larger monasteries usually have a designated monk or nun whose task it is to guide and look after visitors. Direct all of your questions to this person or to the Abbott or Abbess, unless you are given permission to speak with others when you arrive. To cultivate an attitude of prayer and obedience, most monks and nuns work in silence. You may greet them politely and respectfully, but do not expect them to speak at length. The conversation lasts only as long as the monk or nun allows! (Novices will not speak at all without permission from the Abbot or Abbess, so do not speak to them. A smile will do!)
- Encourage children to use their "Church behavior" on the entire grounds of the monastery, both inside and out, so they do not disrupt the quiet, prayerful environment. Depending on the day's activities, more or less "kid stuff" may be permitted outside and in the common areas; if your children are too



loud or too rambunctious, one of the monks or nuns will tell you!

- If there is a service in progress during your visit, be in attendance. When you arrive, ask the Abbott or Abbess if there are any services that visitors are not permitted to attend, and if there are, what to do while they are being held.
- The Church may have reserved areas for the monastics to stand, make prostrations, chant, etc. Respect these boundaries, and do not enter those areas unless invited. If you normally sing in the choir or read the epistle in your home parish, let the Abbot or Abbess know. You may be invited to sing or read, but do not be offended if you are not!
- In the monastery proper, never enter the private quarters areas.
- If you are invited to share a meal with the monks or nuns in the monastery dining room, follow the lead of the Abbott or Abbess for the opening prayer, when to start eating and drinking, the quantity you eat, and the level and subject of conversation (e.g., if the monastery eats in silence, be silent). When the meal is over, the Abbott or Abbess will rise to begin the closing prayers. Do not eat after those prayers unless given permission to do so. Offer to clean up following any shared meals.
- If you wish to leave the monastery grounds at any time during your visit - to take a walk in the woods, stop at a store, mail a letter, etc. - ask the blessing of the Abbot or Abbess. If he or she is not available, tell someone where you are going and when you will return.
- When staying overnight in the monastery's guest house, you may be able (or asked) to cook your own meals in its kitchen. Remember that monastic communities fast from meat every day, so do not bring meat with you. Follow the prescribed fasting periods for abstaining from fish, dairy products, wine, and olive oil.
- If you are a guest for an extended time during a

non-fasting period, you may ask permission to play music on a portable cassette or CD player in the guest house or while you work outside the Church. Keep the volume low, and choose appropriately. Liturgical, ethnic (e.g., balalaika orchestra), and non-New Age instrumental selections may be enjoyed even by the monks or nuns, but the music should never disrupt or interfere with the prayer life of the community.

- Obviously, the guest house is to be left clean and tidy when you depart from a longer visit - monasteries aren't hotels, and don't have maid service! Monasteries do not ask for anything in return for the hospitality they provide, but consider leaving a donation with the Abbott or Abbess, if you use the guest house, to cover the cost of heating, utilities, etc. (A good rule of thumb is one-half to two-thirds of what you would have spent staying at the local hotel, depending on whether or not you brought your own food.)
- When you leave, be sure to say goodbye to all those you spoke with at length if they are available, and ask for the blessing of the Abbot or Abbess.

Finally, remember to say a prayer of thanks to God for the monastery and the salvation and health of the monks and nuns with whom you prayed, and to include the monasteries you visit in your family's almsgiving during the fasting seasons and throughout the year.

To get started, ask your parish priest for the names, addresses, contact persons and phone numbers of monasteries in your vicinity, or near where you will be vacationing. A full directory of Orthodox monasteries in North America is also maintained on the World Wide Web at [www.nettinker.com/monasteries/](http://www.nettinker.com/monasteries/). This site includes up-to-date listings for eight jurisdictions, and links to monasteries' web pages whenever possible.

When you find a monastic retreat which aids your spiritual growth, visit often!

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## A LESSON FOR CHILDREN ... WHAT DO MONKS & NUNS DO?

by Nichola Toda Krause  
Orthodox Family Life

When the Holy Spirit established the Church on Pentecost, those who followed Christ were given a way to praise God and work toward salvation together, instead of struggling alone.

Every Orthodox Christian should be working toward *salvation* (which means "coming closer to God"), but some men and women are called by Him to put all their effort into knowing Him. They love praying to God and studying His Word so much that they do not

marry or have children. The lives of these *monks* and *nuns* are totally dedicated to God and His Church.

Monks and nuns live away from the rest of the world in communities called monasteries. Men's monasteries are led by an abbot, and women's monasteries by an abbess.

The most important job of a monk or nun is to **pray**, both privately and *communally* ("as a group" or

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## A Lesson ...

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“together”) by reading the holy Hours, participating in frequent (sometimes daily) Liturgy, and observing all the other services and feasts in the cycle of the Church. Monks and nuns go to Church several times a day, every day!

While we are at school and at work, or playing in the back yard, monks and nuns make sure that praise is *always* offered to God. Day or night, a monk or a nun somewhere in the world is singing to God or praying silently. That means the Orthodox Church is *always* at prayer.

Monks and nuns *pray for us*. They pray in our place when we are doing something which keeps us from saying our own prayers, and they pray on our behalf by asking God to grant salvation and health to every Orthodox Christian. (They do this every day, even if we don't pray ourselves because we're too young or too sick - or just too lazy.) Because of monks and nuns, we are always remembered before God. What a great gift!

Because monks and nuns spend so much time praying and studying, they have a very special wisdom with which to interpret the world in which we live today. Many people call on monastics to ask for advice and guidance, or to learn more about the Orthodox Faith.

The second job of a monk or nun is **to teach the True Faith, Holy Tradition, and an Orthodox lifestyle** to all of us, both formally (in sermons, lectures, or writings) and informally, by their example.

Many monastics become experts in specific areas: Scripture, the writings of the Church Fathers and Mothers, the lives of the saints, *liturgics* (that is, how and why our religious services are conducted), iconography, music, etc. With the blessing of their Abbot or Abbess, they may travel to speak, or write and publish books and newsletters on topics important to the Church. If several monks or nuns share the same area of expertise, the monastery itself may host retreats or lectures for those interested in learning more.

Monks or nuns will often mentor (“oversee and guide”) the studies of others, and help them to grow spiritually and academically so they can work for God, too.

Parish priests and other lay people may ask a monk to be their Spiritual Father. He hears their confessions and guides their spiritual growth and development. Nuns may be Spiritual Mothers, too, but absolution is always given by a priest or monk who is also ordained a priest (called a *hieromonk* or *archimandrite*).

Participating in the full cycle of Church services, praying privately, studying the Scripture and the writings of the Church Fathers and teaching occupy a great deal of a monk's or nun's day. But in addition to their full-time efforts in praying and teaching, many monastics work “part-time” to support their monastery.

Individual monks or nuns may write *icons* (that is, holy pictures that tell stories about Christ and the saints) for use in our homes and Churches or create beautifully-written passages of Scripture (called “illuminated calligraphy”), if God has given them that talent. Others may translate Scripture, music, or the writings of the Church Fathers from Greek, Russian, or Serbian into English for our use, or from English into a different language (like Aleut or Japanese) for missionary use.

A monastery might sell candles, incense, or other religious items (like prayer ropes), which certain monks or nuns spend part of each day making by hand. Frequently, monastic communities operate a book store or collect and sell items used in Church services or in our icon corners at home, since many parishes and families visit them.

Some monks or nuns may be assigned the tasks of planting and tending the monastery's orchards and gardens, preparing food for the community and its visitors, and doing the cleaning and washing for everyone, so that others may do different types of work.

The whole monastic community works together to do God's work. Monks and nuns work toward salvation together, by praying, studying God's Word and teaching it to us and to others, and working hard to support the Church and the monastery where they live.

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**Costescu, Nick**, 87. St. George Cathedral, Regina, SK.

**Ellen, Emma**, 84. St. Mary, Chicago, IL.

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**Paun, Ecaterina**, 79. Holy Resurrection, Warren, OH.

**Pitiriciu, Virgil**, 75. Holy Trinity, Miramar, FL.

**Tautan, Vioara Viorica**, 72. St. Nicholas, Montreal, QC.

## Church Growth

*Cont. from page 11*

Shorewood).<sup>7</sup> Then remember that half of the adults at St. Luke parish are above this age.

Every Orthodox Christian, not just the clergy, is responsible for fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). This is not a choice; it is an obligation. But NCD can help us do this successfully and enjoy ourselves along the way.

For more information go to the NCD website: [www.ncd-international.org](http://www.ncd-international.org). This site will give you a comprehensive description of NCD and answer any questions you may have....

*From The Evangelist, Spring 2006, a publication of St. Luke the Evangelist Orthodox Church, Palos Hills, IL.*



# CUVÂNT DE SUFLET

## Învierea Domnului – “Bucuria cea veșnică.”

Praznicul Învierii Domnului reprezintă pentru creștinii ortodocși momentul de maximă bucurie duhovnicească din cuprinsul întregului an bisericesc. Cu adevărat, nu cunoaștem un eveniment mai important, mai plin de semnificație soteriologică, mai triumfător din punct de vedere al bucuriei pe care o exprimă, decât Învierea Domnului. Acum, potrivit Tradiției, cerurile se deschid, ușile altarelor stau deschise timp de o săptămână (Săptămâna Luminată) Biserica a rânduit ca nu din uitare, și nici din indiferență, să nu se facă rugăciuni pentru cei adormiți, poate și din pricină că acum “toate se umplu de bucurie, și cerul și pământul, ca să prăznuiască întreaga făptură Învierea lui Hristos.”

Fericitul prilej al prăznuirii Învierii Domnului trebuie să constituie pentru fiecare dintre noi momentul deplinei regăsiri cu Dumnezeu și cu noi înșine. Bucuria triumfului vieții asupra morții, a adevărului asupra incertitudinii, a perspectivei unei veșnicii fericite pentru întreaga făptură, trebuie să ne facă pe fiecare în parte mai sensibili față de nevoile semenilor, mai atașați față de Hristos Domnul “Cel ce a răsărit din mormânt,” mai conștienți de importanța unei viețuiri în spiritul Revelației și a Tradiției Bisericii. Și aceasta potrivit Sf. Ap. Pavel, care ne spune: “dacă ați înviat împreună cu Hristos, căutați cele de sus, unde se află Hristos!” (Col. 3,1).

Nu găsim la Sf. Ap. Pavel nici o referință la Învierea Domnului, fără ca aceasta să nu aibă legătură cu învierea oamenilor, cu alte cuvinte, întotdeauna mărturisirea evenimentului binecuvântat al Învierii Domnului are un aspect soteriologic, mântuitor, pentru noi. Capitolul 15 din Epistola Întâia către Corinteni chiar așa se și intitulează: “Învierea Domnului și învierea noastră.” Nimic nu a făcut Domnul care să nu aibe în vedere mântuirea făpturii, dincolo de durerea Sfintelor Patimi, nici chiar lepezile mormântului nu l-au putut despărți pe Hristos Domnul de marea Sa dragoste pentru om. O dragoste deplină, o dragoste asumată chiar cu prețul morții și a suferințelor fizice, o dragoste care prin înviere a transfigurat lumea, a schimbat sensul morții fizice și i-a deschis omului perspectiva unei viețuiri veșnice în lumina Învierii Domnului.

Potrivit aceluiași Apostol “al neamurilor”, dacă Hristos nu a înviat, totul este zadarnic, însuși faptul de a crede în Dumnezeu (I Cor. 15, 17), de aceea el dădea mărturie neîncetat, că Hristos “a fost îngropat și a înviat a treia zi, după Scripturi” (I Cor. 15, 4). Că S-a arătat lui Chefa și celor 12 apostoli (v. 5), la peste cinci sute de frați (v. 6), lui Iacov și tuturor apostolilor (v. 7) și în cele din urmă și lui însuși (v. 8).

Învierea lui Hristos se leagă prin urmare de învierea morților, pentru că “dacă nu este înviere a morților, nici Hristos nu a înviat” (I Cor. 15, 13). “Căci pentru

aceasta a murit și a înviat Hristos, ca să stăpânească și peste morți și peste vii” (Rom. 6, 9). De acest aspect ne încredințează și Sf. Ioan Damaschin în Dogmatica sa, spunând: “Pe Lazăr l-a înviat Domnul pentru a dovedi dumnezeirea Sa și pentru a ne încredința de învierea Lui și a noastră... Prin urmare vom învia. Sufletele se vor uni cu trupurile, iar acestea vor fi nestricăcioase, pentru că vor dezbrăca stricăciunea.”

Este important să avem în vedere aspectele mai sus menționate, mai cu seamă că sunt printre noi oameni care ar dori să înveșnicească dimensiunea materială, chipul acestei lumi, uitând de fapt cu totul de perspectiva veșniciei și a învierii tuturor în Dumnezeu. Ancorați așadar în vizibil, să nu uităm de ceea ce nu se vede cu ochiul fizic, ci se percepe doar cu ochiul sufletului, în chip tainic și duhovnicesc, pentru că “dacă nădăjdum în Hristos numai în viața aceasta, suntem mai de plâns decât toți oamenii” (I Cor. 15, 19).

Prin faptul Învierii Domnului putem înțelege ceea ce atât de profund spunea Alexandru Paleologul: “Bătrânețea și moartea nu sunt același lucru. Chiar cred că cea mai mare distanță de moarte o ai la bătrânețe.” Extraordinar! Prin harul Învierii Domnului, oricât de înaintat în vârstă ar fi cineva, rămâne tânăr sufletește, cu alte cuvinte, nu înaintarea în vârstă trebuie să ne nelineștească, ci pericolul unei involuții spirituale, pericolul regresului spiritual și închiderea noastră în dimensiunea unei lumi finite, lipsite de perspectiva Învierii.

Într-o Cuvântare a împăratului Constantin “către adunarea sfinților,” reprodusă de Eusebiu de Cezareea în Istoria sa bisericească, praznicul Învierii Domnului este definit ca “lumină care covârșește lumina,” ca și “cale ce duce la viața veșnică.” În spiritul acestor afirmații, putem spune și noi că doar trăind în Biserică evenimentul minunat al Învierii Domnului, aceasta ne devine “cale către viața veșnică.” Biserica a și fost definită de fapt de către teologul ortodox francez drept “laborator al Învierii”, pentru că doar între granițele ei eclesiologice poate creștinul cu adevărat experia în mod autentic, în conformitate și continuitate cu Tradiția Bisericii, evenimentul Învierii Domnului.

Dar participarea la moartea și Învierea Domnului devin prin participarea credinciosului la viața liturgică a Bisericii, la Tainele acesteia, o experiență prezentă. Potrivit lui Nicolae Cabasila, în cultul Bisericii, Hristos se află permanent în stare de jertfă și de înviere. “Gustați și vedeți...” ne îndeamnă chiar o cântare din Postul Mare. Nici nu ar putea fi de fapt altfel, pentru că doar așa ne explicăm dănuirea Bisericii peste veacuri. Hristos umple, inundă am putea spune, Biserica cu har, har care actualizează evenimentele mântuitoare realizate de Hristos pentru om. De aceea a și avut loc

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# VIZITA CANONICĂ A PREA SFINȚITULUI EPISCOP IRINEU LA MISIUNEA “SFINȚII TREI IERARHI” DIN SEATTLE, WASHINGTON



În perioada 3-6 martie 2006, Prea Sfințitul Irineu însoțit de Ierodiaconul Sebastian Dumitrașcu, a efectuat o vizită părintească în mijlocul comunității ortodoxe românești din Seattle WA, la invitația P.C. Preot Ioan Cătană care, cu multă jertfelnicie și dragoste, slujește această parohie. Așa cum mulți știu, comunitatea românească ce locuiește în această zonă, de mult timp se pregătește să ridice casă lui Dumnezeu unde să se poată ruga în tradiția, obiceiurile și limba noastră românească. În ultima perioadă s-a reușit cumpărarea unei proprietăți unde va fi construită în cel mai scurt timp biserica. La inițiativa Cosiliului Parohial și-a P.C. Preot Paroh Ioan Cătană, în seara zilei de sâmbătă 4 martie 2006 s-a organizat o întâlnire a tuturor românilor care doresc să contribuie la strângerea de fonduri pentru începutul construcției. Au răspuns aproximativ 200 de persoane care au participat la cina pregătită pentru această ocazie. Deschiderea întâlnirii a avut loc cu rugăciunea “Tatăl Nostru” după care Prea Sfințitul Irineu a binecuvântat bucatele pregătite și pe toți cei prezenți. După o scurtă introducere din partea Preotului Paroh, Prea Sfințitul Irineu a rostit o cuvântare prin care a arătat însemnătatea întâlnirii, rolul nostru de a contribui fiecare după puterile noastre la ridicarea bisericii și mai ales necesitatea de a avea o biserică unde să se păstreze tradițiile și obiceiurile noastre, biserică ce ne va reprezenta pentru generațiile viitoare și prin care vom rămâne nemuritori în fața veșniciei, ridicând aici biserica lui Dumnezeu.

Trebuie remarcat faptul că în această zonă trăiesc români deosebiți și doritori de frumos, cu care ne putem mândri, dând toți dovadă de unitate și dragoste de cele sfinte. Donațiile au fost peste așteptări, sămânța semănătorului fiind aruncată în pământ roditor. Cuvintele Prea Sfințitului Irineu și ale Părintelui Ioan au mers la sufletele oamenilor, care și-au arătat generozitatea. În câteva ore s-au strâns peste \$100,000.00 și s-au făcut angajamente (pledge) de \$450,000.00 din partea familiilor prezente. Deci, unde este dragoste de credință și neam, se pot face minuni. În doar câteva ceasuri s-a ajuns la mai bine de o jumătate de milion de dolari. Cinste și laudă pentru această comunitate care face cinste românilor care trăiesc în SUA, și care trebuie să fie un exemplu pentru mulți alții care doresc să ridice biserică lui Dumnezeu. Negreșit, binecuvântarea lui Dumnezeu se va revărsa peste acești oameni minunați. Această seară istorică pentru comunitatea din Seattle, a continuat cu un recital de poezie și cântec, oferite cu multă dragoste și talent, de binecunoscuta și mult apreciată solistă, venită în mod special pentru această seară de la Suceava, Sofia Vicoveanca.

A doua zi, Prea Sfințitul a slujit Sfânta Liturghie arhierescă, la care a participat un mare număr de credincioși, iar în cuvântul său a mulțumit în primul rând lui Dumnezeu pentru aceste binecuvântate lucruri care s-au petrecut la Seattle și pentru acești oameni

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# EDUCAREA CREȘTINĂ A FAMILIEI

## Sfântul Apostol Iacob, fratele Sfântului Apostol Ioan

Sf. Ap. Iacob, fratele Sf. Ioan Evanghelistul și fiul al lui Zevedeu, a fost unul din cei 12 apostoli chemați de Domnul nostru Iisus Hristos să-l urmeze și să ajute la salvarea omenirii prin propovăduirea creștinismului. Împreună cu Petru și Ioan, Iacob a fost lăsat să fie de față la învierea fiicei lui Iair și la Schimbarea la Față a Domnului nostru Iisus Hristos pe Muntele Tabor. Tot acești trei au fost luați mai aproape de Iisus Hristos când se ruga în Grădina Ghetsimani, dar, depărtându-se de ei, aceștia au adormit. "Privegheați și vă rugați, ca să nu intrați în ispită. Că duhul este osârduitor, dar trupul neputincios" (Marcu, 14, 38), le-a spus Iisus Hristos întristat de slăbiciunea trupului omenesc.

După pogorârea Sfântului Duh, Sf. Apostol Iacob se duce să răspândească Evanghelia în Spania, apoi prin alte ținuturi și, în final, se întoarce în Ierusalim unde întâmpină multe greutăți. Fiind un foarte bun orator, dușmanii lui apelează la filosoful și vrăjitorul Ermogen. Acesta însă crede că este prea mare pentru a intra în polemică cu Sf. Iacob și îl trimite pe ucenicul său Filit să-l atace verbal pe Iacob. Filit, însă, este atât de impresionat de învățătura Sf. Ap. Iacob încât nici măcar nu deschide gura și întorcându-se la învățătorul lui îl sfătuiește să treacă la creștinism. Ermogen, înfuriindu-se, cheamă diavolii să-l lege pe Filit, dar prin rugăciunile Sfântului Ap. Iacob, Filit este slobozit și aleargă la casa lui Iacob. Ermogen trimite diavolii să-i aducă pe Iacob și pe Filit la casa lui, dar diavolii nu pot face nimic fiind legați de îngerul lui Dumnezeu. Mai mult, ei se duc și îl aduc pe Ermogen, legat, la casa lui Iacob. Iacob îl dezleagă pe Ermogen de diavoli și îi dă libertatea să plece. Cunoscând neputința diavolilor în fața Sf. Ap. Iacob, propovăduitorul lui Iisus Hristos, Ermogen renunță la vrăjitorie, își arde cărțile și se botează.

Dușmanii Sf. Ap. Iacob trimit o scrisoare către regele Irod cerând ca Apostolul să fie ucis, iar Irod dă sentința de condamnare la moarte prin tăierea capului cu sabia. Atunci unul din pârâșii lui, Iosia, dându-și seama că a greșit și înțelegând că Sf. Ap. Iacob propovăduia dreapta credință, a crezut în Iisus Hristos și s-a declarat creștin, aceasta atrăgându-i și lui condamnarea la moarte. "Și mergând împreună la locul cel de moarte, apostolul l-a făcut sănătos pe un slăbănog oarecare ce zăcea lângă cale. Iar când își gătea grumajii spre tăiere, a rugat Iosia pe Sfântul Iacob ca să-i ierte păcatul cel făcut din neștiință, căci a fost clevetitor asupra lui la împărat. Iar apostolul, cuprinzându-l, l-a sărutat zicând: "Pace ție". Și și-au plecat amândoi capetele spre tăiere și astfel s-au sfârșit" (Viețile Sfinților pe Aprilie). Trupul Sf. Ap. Iacob a fost luat de ucenicii săi și dus în Spania.

Sf. Apostol Iacob, fratele lui Ioan, se sărbătorește pe 30 Aprilie a fiecărui an.

### Întrebări pentru părinți:

- Le-am vorbit copiilor noștri despre Sf. Apostol și Evanghelist Ioan și Sf. Iacob, fiii lui Zevedeu? Le-am citit copiilor noștri sau le-am povestit despre învierea fiicei lui Iair și despre Schimbarea la Față pe Muntele Tabor? Le-am citit despre Muntele Măslinilor și zbuciumul din Grădina Ghetsimani?
- Am luat noi, în familie, o atitudine fermă împotriva vrăjitoriei, spiritismului, ghicitului în cărți, în cafea, împotriva "clarvizionului", a horoscopului, etc? Nu cumva, chiar noi înșine ne-am amestecat, fără să ne dăm seama de ceea ce facem, cu ghicitorii, crezând că e ceva distractiv sau din curiozitate sau crezând că nu e nimic rău? Atenție! Faci primul pas din curiozitate, apoi te afunzi din ce în ce mai mult până nu ai ieșire. E adevărat că unii din cei ce ghicesc, în special tinerii, mint de dragul de a minți și inventează lucruri de dragul de a inventa. Alții o fac pentru bani. Dar există vrăjitoare de-adevăratelea și "ghicitoare" care lucrează cu diavolii. Cea mai mare minciună a vremurilor noastre este că diavolii nu există. Diavolii există, și în timp ce noi glumim și ne îmbrăcăm copiii în drăcușori de Halloween, ei își bat joc de sufletele noastre și ale copiilor noștri. Diavolii știu ce răutăți au făcut și spun ghicitoarei aceste răutăți și știu ce răutăți au de gând să facă și le spun și pe acestea. Ghicitoarea ia banii, iar diavolii iau puterea de a se apropia de sufletul celui ce merge la ghicit sau vrăjit pentru că acesta și-a pus sufletul la îndemâna lor. Creștinii nu au ce căuta la ghicitoare, la vrăjitoare etc. "Cât despre... ucigași și desfrânați și vrăjitori și închinători la idoli...partea lor este în iezerul care arde cu foc și cu pucioasă, care este moartea cea de a doua" (Apocalipsa, 21,8). Demonii nu au putere asupra noastră dacă noi nu le dăm această putere. Deci, dacă noi ne rugăm lui Dumnezeu, ne spovedim, ne împărtășim, mergem la biserică, nu avem de ce să ne temem. Dacă aveți un necaz, duceți-vă la preotul dumneavoastră: "Uite, părinte, am necazul ăsta și ăsta, roagă-te pentru mine", sau dacă nu aveți preot unde sunteți, scrieți unui prieten să meargă la preotul lui să se roage pentru dumneavoastră. Bineînțeles, e foarte important să ne rugăm noi înșine, să spunem Tatăl Nostru, să spunem rugăciunea inimii ("Doamne Iisuse Hristoase, Fiul Lui Dumnezeu, miluiește-mă pe mine, păcătosul.") să ne rugăm cum știm și Dumnezeu ne va mângâia. Dacă deja ați fost la vrăjitori sau

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# EMANOIL GOJDU ȘI "FUNDAȚIA GOJDU"

Cred că nu a fost suficient scoasă în evidență o împrejurare cu totul remarcabilă a istoriei spațiului transilvan (ardealo-banatic) din veacul al XIX-lea, împrejurare care a făcut, de altcundă, cu puțință "Marea Unire" din 1918.

Este vorba de faptul că trei macedo-români au creat realitatea faptică, terenul, care a îngăduit unirea spațiului ardealo-banatic cu România, într-o manieră care uluiește și azi, prin eficacitatea și repeziciunea cu care s-a făcut.

Acești trei oameni au fost: în domeniul organizării politice, Alexandru Mocioni, în cel duhovnicesc, Andrei Șaguna, iar în cel cultural-economic, Emanoil Gojdu. Dar poate cel mai de seamă și trainic efect l-a avut acțiunea lui Emanoil Gojdu.

Născut în Oradea, în Februarie 1802, din părinți macedo-români săraci, el avea să ajungă unul dintre cei mai de seamă avocați ai Ungariei și bun prieten cu Dék Ferenc, (numit de către contemporanii lui unguri, "părintele patriei" și pe care Gojdu îl considera ca fiind tot macedo-român de neam, dintr-o familie "Pescaru"). Gojdu era mândru de originea lui macedo-română și de credința lui Ortodoxă, pe care nu le-a ascuns nici când a ajuns conducător al "casei magniților" și comite al celui mai românesc "comitat" din spațiul ardealo-banatic, Caraș. Era un Ortodox convins și în casa lui se vorbea doar românește sau dialectul macedo-român. Cu mari onorori va fi înmormântat în cimitirul central din Budapesta. Curând acolo se va ridica un superb mausoleu care s-a sfințit prin Protopopul militar Pavel Boldea, străbunicul matern al semnatarului acestor rânduri.

Cea mai de seamă înfăptuire a lui Emanoil Gojdu a fost stabilirea "Fundăției Gojdu," care cuprindea practic întreaga avere colosală a lui. Singurul scop al fundăției era să dea burse studenților și elevilor români din spațiul ardealo-banatic. (Emanoil Gojdu a fost cel mai de seamă binefăcător al studenților ardealo-banatici și el a fost urmat, în acest domeniu, de către boierul basarabean, Vasile Stroescu.)

Acea fundăție a fost cu mare grijă așezată și plănuită a dăinui cel puțin două sute de ani. Fondul principal urma să crească mereu, vreme de cincizeci de ani, și în acei ani burse urmau a fi acordate din ceea ce superb testamentul numea, "camăta cametelor" (dobânda adăugită). Apoi, treptat, se putea trece la extinderea programului și deci atacarea "principalului," dar numai până la 1/5 din valoarea lui, după care din nou acest "principal" trebuia să fie crescut la valoarea inițială. Cu o intuiție fenomenală, Gojdu a investit majoritatea averii sale în bunuri imobiliare care și azi sunt în picioare, în Budapesta, unde au valoare de piață colosală.

Ceea ce a realizat "Fundăția Gojdu" și însemnătatea ei pentru spațiul ardealo-banatic nu poate fi expedit în câteva rânduri (faptul că sute de studenți au fost

scoliți, faptul că aceste burse au ținut în funcție liceele românești din spațiul ardealo-banatic; din Brașov și Beiuș etc., etc.). Dar un lucru trebuie foarte bine înțeles.

Faptul că după 1 Decembrie 1918 spațiul ardealo-banatic s-a putut integra României fără zguduiri, fără criză, s-a datorat directorilor de bănci "populare," care au finanțat unirea și au făcut posibilă funcționarea sistemului administrativ; plata salariilor și pensilor etc., profesorilor și învățătorilor care au făcut cu puțință continuarea sistemului didactic și instantaneea lui convertire în limba română, doctorilor și preoților care au păstrat sănătoasă viața fizică și spirituală. Toți acești anonimi, care au făcut cu puțință "România Mare," toți până la unul, au fost bursieri ai "Fundăției Gojdu"!

Emanoil Gojdu a fost stimat de Românii ardealo-bănățeni fără rezervă. Ca exemple personale, pot menționa că în "casa Boldea," din Borloveni Vechi, Caraș-Severin, casa strămoșilor mei materni și azi există un mare tablou al lui Gojdu și fotografii ale mausoleului său cu adnotația, "sfințit prin subscribul (sic!) Protopop militar Pavel Boldea." Iar prin anii 70 ai veacului XX, la un comentariu vag indiferent al nevestei mele despre Mocioni, Șaguna și Gojdu, bunicul ei, cantorul ardelean din Ciuguzul, Aron Marina, a ripostat aproape în lacrimi, "tu știi măcar ce vorbești? Aștia sunt sfinții Ardealului!"

Faptul că astăzi această colosală Fundăție este "tărguită" de fripturiști, politicieni Români și Unguri, este o rușine adusă memoriei celui om bun. Nu am îndoială că cei vinovați vor fi bătuți de Dumnezeu.

Neamul românesc a mai trecut prin necazuri și sunt încredințat că va trece și prin acesta, datorită "stratului" etnic și spiritual care nu s-a schimbat de la începutul istoriei.

Alexandru Nemoianu

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ghicitoare, duceți-vă și spovediți-vă cât mai repede cu puțință. Și mai ales aveți grijă ca fiii și fiicele voastre să nu facă aceeași greșală foarte periculoasă pentru suflet. Mai ales că literatura și filmele pentru copii din ziua de azi prezintă vrăjitoria nu numai ca pe ceva nepericulos ci mai mult, ca pe ceva atrăgător, ca pe o calitate deosebită a celor "deosebiți". Și copiii sunt tentați să fie "deosebiți".

- Suntem noi siguri că fiii și fiicele noastre nu sunt deja angrenați în "jocuri vrăjitoarești"? Le-am explicat noi copiilor noștri pericolul acestor "jocuri nevinovate"? Am apelat la ajutorul preotului pentru a clarifica ideile copilului?

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# IN MEMORIAM: SIMON SPERIOSU

La 7 noiembrie 2005, în urma unei scurte și necruțătoare suferințe s-a stins din viață la New York, trecând la cele veșnice, Dr. Simon Speriosu. Dr. Simon Speriosu a fost un neobosit militant pentru păstrarea identității numelui de român pe toate meridianele, din Valea Timocului până în inima Americii, activând în numele acestei idei. În toți anii petrecuți în California în comunitatea românească el a făcut parte atât din Consiliul de Administrație al Casei Române și Capela cât și din Consiliul Parohial al Bisericii Învierea Domnului din Hayward, al cărui Președinte a fost câțiva ani la rând, până a hotărât a se retrage. Doctorului Simon Speriosu îi datorează parohia Învierea Domnului reglementarea statutului preotului, în ceea ce privește remunerarea lui în condiții care să asigure demnitate în profesarea acestei misiuni. Dr.-ul Speriosu a considerat moral ca retribuția preotului parohiei să fie la un nivel care să asigure o existență decentă pentru preot și familia sa în condițiile Californiei, fără să oblige preotul la prestarea altor activități care să îi asigure subzistența.

Simon Speriosu s-a născut la 18 noiembrie 1923 în Banatul Sârbesc. A venit în România să studieze și în 1950 a absolvit Facultatea de Medicină la București, fiind repartizat în județul Tecuci în comuna în care s-a născut Gh. Apostol și unde acesta mediasse construcția unui dispensar cu sală de nașteri, modern pentru acele timpuri pentru satele românești. La un an după încadrarea lui aici, datorită relațiilor tensionate ale României cu Tito, cercarea lor, a familiei Doina și Simon Speriosu, de naturalizare prin căpătarea cetățeniei române, a fost respinsă de către Statul Român și familia Speriosu a fost nevoită să se întoarcă în Iugoslavia. În 1951 Simon Speriosu revine cu familia la Belgrad, urmează cursuri de specializare în neropsihiatrie și este angajat ca medic, lucrând în diferite spitale, în diferite localități până în anul 1969, când se hotărăște să emigreze în Statele Unite ale Americii. Se prezintă la Ambasada Americană din Belgrad și datorită cererii mari de medici din SUA, emigrarea familiei sale este imediat aprobată. Chiar în 1969 se expatriază, călătorește cu vaporul către SUA, aducând cu ei printre bagaje și 500 de volume de cărți în limba română. În SUA, întâmpinați de Statuia Libertății, debarcă la New York. Pe vapor li se oferă Green Cardul și imediat ajunși pe teritoriul Americii reușesc să se stabilească în Cleveland, Ohio, unde Dr. Speriosu găsește o slujbă în domeniul medical la Spitalul de Stat din localitate, unde era Director un conațional. În timp de 2 ani și jumătate, Dr. Speriosu își ia toate examenele de licență și completează stagiul de rezidență, iar din 1972 este încadrat la Spitalul de Psihiatrie din Savana, Georgia în calitate de Clinical Director, rămânând în această funcție până la pensionarea sa în anul 1985, când

decide să se mute în California, unde fiul său Virgil își urma studiile de doctorat la CalTech. Dr. Speriosu se reangajează la Napa State Hospital, unde lucrează până la a doua se pensionare, totalizând 45 de ani de serviciu de credință în domeniul medical. Ajuns în California, la imediat legătura cu Prof. Ilie Smultea și din 1986 este permanent activ în comunitatea românească, în cadrul organizației Casa Română și Capela, până la plecarea lui din zonă. După pensionare, ca să se apropie de fiu, se mută de la Napa în anul 2000, în San Jose. În casa din San Jose îi primește și îl găzduiește pe preotul Dumitru Ionescu cu soția, până acesta se mută în apartamentul său din Hayward, veghind ca preotul parohiei noastre să aibă asigurate condiții de viață decente. Mai apoi, datorită bolii de inimă a soției, doamnă Doina Speriosu, se hotărăsc ca în 2002 să se mute la New York, fiind mai aproape de fiică și ginere, amândoi slujitori în domeniul medical. De peste tot unde s-a aflat, Dr. Simon Speriosu a fost în legătură cu conaționalii săi din Banatul Sârbesc și din întreaga lume, trimițând ajutoare la nevoie, menținând corespondență pe toate meridianele lumii și luând atitudine civică pentru păstrarea identității românești, acolo unde ea era în pericol.

Un moment de reculegere pentru cel ce a fost Simon Speriosu.

Oana Leonte  
Biserica Învierea Domnului,  
Hayward, California

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- Atenție la lupii în haină de oaie: dacă o vrăjitoare sau ghicitoare are lângă ea și niște obiecte religioase (iconițe, etc) nu înseamnă că "lucrează cu Dumnezeu". Înseamnă că face blasfemie și asocierea cu ea este urâtă în fața Domnului.
- Iosia, când și-a dat seama că a greșit împotriva Sf. Ap. Iacob și-a recunoscut greșeala și și-a cerut iertare. Avem noi curajul să recunoaștem când am greșit împotriva cuiva și să ne cerem iertare? I-am învățat pe copiii noștri să prețuiască adevărul mai mult decât orice și să-și ceară iertare dacă au greșit cuiva? Deși a plătit cu viața pentru mărturiile false împotriva lui, Sf. Ap. Iacob l-a iertat pe Iosia pentru mărturie falsă. Dar dacă cineva ne-a greșit și ne cere iertare, suntem noi gata să iertăm? I-am învățat pe copiii noștri să-i ierte pe cei ce le greșesc?

Avem mult de lucrat pe tărâm spiritual, dar cu ajutorul lui Dumnezeu, vom reuși să ne salvăm sufletele noastre și ale copiilor noștri.

**Maica Preoteasă**



# O BISERICĂ MAI MARE PENTRU WASHINGTON



## Biserica Ortodoxa Romana Sfantul Andrei

Anul care a trecut a adus bisericii noastre un spor de duhovnicie, o mai mare grija pentru nevoile spirituale ale credincioșilor și o grijă nouă pentru noi toți și, același timp, și o mare bucurie: achiziționarea unui teren pentru construirea unei noi biserici, mai mare și mai apropiată de geniul arhitectural românesc, așa cum o vedem noi în duh.

Realizarea acestei prime trepte – cumpărarea terenului – s-a făcut cu mult entuziasm din partea Consiliului Parohial și a credincioșilor noștri și Dumnezeu ne-a stat în ajutor pentru că El cunoaște inima fiecăruia dintre noi și știe că îl iubim și că ceea ce facem este pentru slava Lui și a neamului nostru. În zona Washingtonului, toate națiunile lumii, creștine și necreștine își au o biserică sau alt locaș de închinăciune în legea lor, numai noi Românii nu avem decât această mică Biserică în care ne înghesuim pentru a ne ruga, iar acum, în plus, avem și un teren gol care ne cheamă pentru zidirea cea mare.

Nu vreau să spun că o biserică mai mare este mai propice pentru duhovnicie și iubire – biserica noastră, așa micuță cum este ea, e plină de prezența Sfântului Duh și de a sfinților lui Dumnezeu. Dar ea a devenit neîncăpătoare și mai este, în plus, și demnitatea românească în joc.

În trecut, bisericile erau ridicate de domnitori sau de boieri bogați și credincioși care își legau viața și averea de câte o mănăstire pe care o zideau și o închinau lui Dumnezeu, Maicii Domnului, sau vreunui alt sfânt.

Astăzi, vremurile sunt diferite și o biserică sau o mănăstire se zidesc de către poporul cel credincios, de săraci. De cele mai multe ori ele se zidesc cu bănuțul văduvei sărace. Dar la temelia lor stă credința, puterea de sacrificiu și de dăruire a acestor oameni, așa cum suntem și noi aici, străduindu-ne să lăsăm urmașilor

noștri o biserică în care să sintetizăm geniul românesc al construirii de lăcașuri sfinte, arta sacră a icoanelor și bucuria celor care vor veni după noi și care vor putea spune: *Iată această Biserică. Ea a fost zidită de buncii noștri, de părinții noștri care au fost imigranți și au vrut să ne lase nouă amintirea peste veacuri a ceea ce ei au crezut, au iubit și s-au ostenit să ne lase și nouă, în această formă concretă, învățătura lor spirituală.*

Să fiți toți binecuvântați spre rodirile cele bune, spre slava lui Dumnezeu și a credinței noastre strămoșești.

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**Preot Gheorghe Calciu**  
**Parohiei "Sfânta Cruce" din**  
**Alexandria, Virginia**





## Vizita Canonică ...

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minunați. La sfârșitul Sf. Liturghii, a avut loc o agapă frățească în cinstea Prea Sfințitului Irineu unde au participat toți cei prezenți la Sfânta Slujbă.

Dumnezeu, în pronia Sa divină, a rânduit ca la sfințirea pietrei de temelie a noii biserici cu hramul Sfinții Trei Ierarhi din Seattle, care va avea loc duminică 18 iunie 2006, să participe trei ierarhi ai Bisericii; cu ajutorul Atotputernicului vom avea bucuria de a avea alături de ierarhii noștri, Înalț Prea Sfințitul Arhiepiscop Nathaniel și Prea Sfințitul Episcop Vicar Irineu, pe Înalț Prea Sfințitul Dr. Laurențiu Streza, Mitropolitul Ardealului.

Vă așteptăm cu drag pe toți la această mare bucurie duhovnicească a comunității românești din Seattle. Mulțumiri și felicitări tuturor care sprijină și contribuie la această acțiune nobilă din viața Bisericii și comunității românești.

**Participant**

## Cuvânt de Suflet

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mai apoi Cincizecimea, ca toate evenimentele semnificative realizate de Hristos, să devină în viața Bisericii un prezent continuu. De aceea, în noaptea învierii nu venim la biserică pentru a ne aminti doar de înviere, ci spun cântările "Acum înviind din mormânt ne-a dăruit viață veșnică..." Prin urmare, totul e prezent, totul e azi. Aici stă poate și importanța demersului catehetic, omiletic al slujitorilor Bisericii. Credincioșii nu au de unde să afle aceste realități, dacă noi nu le vorbim despre ele. Dar poate pentru a le vorbi, trebuie mai întâi să le trăim și astfel mărturisirea lor va fi vie, autentică. Una dintre catavasiile învierii e relevantă în privința acestei participări reale a creștinului ortodox de astăzi la moartea și învierea Domnului: "Ieri m-am îngropat împreună cu Tine, Hristoase, astăzi mă ridic împreună cu Tine, Cel ce ai înviat. Răstignitu-m-am ieri împreună cu Tine, Însuți împreună mă preamărește, Mântuitorule, întru împărăția Ta."

Ce ne oferă așadar astăzi nouă praznicul Învierii Domnului? În ce fel suntem acum mai pregătiți decât anul trecut să-l întâmpinăm? Sunt întrebări la care fiecare ar trebui să ne dăm un răspuns. Cu siguranță însă că Învierea Domnului e cea care constituie fundamentul unei vieți spirituale profunde, ancorate în realismul liturgic, temeiul bucuriei creștine că nu totul se realizează în această lume imperfectă și de multe ori nedreaptă. Cuprinși așadar de bucuria negrăită a Învierii Domnului, să fim fiecare dintre noi martori vii ai Domnului Celui Înviat, fii ai Învierii.

Să ne apropiem de Hristos Cel ce a înviat din morți cu inimile curate, bucurându-ne deplin de starea la care Domnul ne-a adus, aceea de a fi "fii ai Învierii"!

Hristos a înviat!

**+IRINEU, Episcop Vicar**

## CHRISTOS A ÎNVIAT!

De Paști. Aprilie, 2006

Pe-un ram de pom, s-au strâns atâtea păsărele!

Și cântă neobosite, dulce, repetat.

Își spun voioase între ele

În cântul lor: "Christos a Înviat!"

Și iată, o narcisă frumoasă ... și pe care,

Un fluture din zbor, s-a așezat,

Să spună tuturor vestea cea mare:

"Ați auzit? Christos a Înviat!"

Toți pomii-mpodobiți de sărbătoare,

Și desmierdați de vântul legănat,

Se-nchină grațios la ceruri și la soare,

Cu plecăciuni de slavă, spun: "Christos a Înviat!"

Și tu și eu, dela Iisus așteptăm mântuirea și vrer  
fim iertați,

Cerându-I îndurare-I promitem să trăim și să fim i  
noi, că frați.

El a murit pe cruce pentru noi ...

Și a-nviat a treia zi după Scripturi ... și ne întrec

"Când cereți mântuirea, dorind să fiți iertați,

Voi, semenilor voștri, iertare, cu dragoste ... dați

Și pentru tot ce-ați greșit, oare, cât regretați?"

O! Dacă ale Lui legi sfinte,

În suflele noastre le-am urmat,

Chiar dacă nu le-am spus în cuvinte,

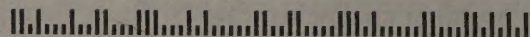
Dar dacă le-am simțit în inimi, cu-adevărat,

Și tu și eu, putem rosti vorba cea sfântă, în care  
credem: "Christos a Înviat!"

**Violeta-Viorica-Maria Bălașa**

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